

§ 1820.2

Counsel (OSC) in processing requests for records under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), as amended, at 5 U.S.C. 552. These rules and procedures should be read together with the FOIA, which provides additional information about access to agency records. Further information about the FOIA and access to OSC records is available on the FOIA page of OSC's Web site (<http://www.osc.gov/foia.htm>). Information routinely provided to the public as part of a regular OSC activity—for example, forms, press releases issued by the public affairs officer, records published on the agency's Web site (<http://www.osc.gov>), or public lists maintained at OSC headquarters offices pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 1219—may be requested and provided to the public without following this part. This part also addresses responses to demands by a court or other authority to an employee for production of official records or testimony in legal proceedings.

§ 1820.2 Requirements for making FOIA requests.

(a) *How made and addressed.* A request for OSC records under the FOIA should be made by writing to the agency. The request should be sent by regular mail addressed to: FOIA Officer, U.S. Office of Special Counsel, 1730 M Street, N.W. (Suite 218), Washington, DC 20036-4505. Such requests may also be faxed to the FOIA Officer at the number provided on the FOIA page of OSC's web site (see § 1820.1). For the quickest handling, both the request letter and envelope or any fax cover sheet should be clearly marked "FOIA Request." Whether sent by mail or by fax, a FOIA request will not be considered to have been received by OSC until it reaches the FOIA Officer.

(b) *Description of records sought.* Requesters must describe the records sought in enough detail for them to be located with a reasonable amount of effort. When requesting records about an OSC case file, the case file number, name, and type (for example, prohibited personnel practice, Hatch Act, USERRA or other complaint; Hatch Act advisory opinion; or whistleblower disclosure) should be provided, if known. Whenever possible, requests should describe any particular record

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sought, such as the date, title or name, author, recipient, and subject matter.

(c) *Agreement to pay fees.* Making a FOIA request shall be considered an agreement by the requester to pay all applicable fees chargeable under § 1820.7, up to and including the amount of \$25.00, unless the requester asks for a waiver of fees. When making a request, a requester may specify a willingness to pay a greater or lesser amount.

§ 1820.3 Consultations and referrals.

When OSC receives a FOIA request for a record in the agency's possession, it may determine that another Federal agency is better able to decide whether or not the record is exempt from disclosure under the FOIA. If so, OSC will either:

(a) Respond to the request for the record after consulting with the other agency and with any other agency that has a substantial interest in the record; or

(b) Refer the responsibility for responding to the request to the other agency deemed better able to determine whether to disclose it. Consultations and referrals will be handled according to the date that the FOIA request was initially received by the first agency.

§ 1820.4 Timing of responses to requests.

(a) *In general.* OSC ordinarily will respond to FOIA requests according to their order of receipt. In determining which records are responsive to a request, OSC ordinarily will include only records in its possession as of the date on which it begins its search for them. If any other date is used, OSC will inform the requester of that date.

(b) *Multitrack processing.* (1) OSC may use two or more processing tracks by distinguishing between simple and more complex requests based on the amount of work and/or time needed to process the request.

(2) When using multitrack processing, OSC may provide requesters in its slower track(s) with an opportunity to limit the scope of their requests in order to qualify for faster processing within the specified limits of the faster track(s).